

Dear friends,

This Sunday is Advent Sunday, normally seen as the countdown to Christmas. I will list all the Christmas services across the RMC a bit later, but I wouldn't want to crowd out Advent which has its own special atmosphere. Advent looks forward, but not just the celebration of Christmas, which after all, happened 2022 years ago but far forwards to the "end times" the final glorious climax of all historical time, equated with the "second coming" (Parousia) of Christ, a process inaugurated at the birth of Jesus that we will contemplate over the next few weeks. This coming Advent Sunday we will host at St. Peter's church, a special Advent Carol service at 6pm. We break out the Advent wreath in each of the churches. What each of the candles signify over the Advent season have various interpretations but the one I use, that accords best with the Sunday readings and is approved by the church of England is;

Advent Sunday – The Patriarchs - purple

Advent 2 – The Prophets - purple

Advent 3 – John the Baptist - purple

Advent 4 – The Blessed virgin Mary (BVM) - pink

Christmas day – Jesus Christ – White



An icon depicting Sophia – Divine Wisdom

Sunday 27th November – Advent Sunday

I will preside at both services at All Saints and St. Michael's at 9.30 and 11am respectively. Archdeacon Trevor Jones will preside at St. Peter's. Then I will return to St. Peter's to preside at the **Advent Carol service at 6pm** on Sunday evening. This Sunday is the beginning of year A in our lectionary, the year in which readings from Matthew's gospel are most prominent.

Isaiah 2: 1-5. Isaiah foresees a time when the God of the Jews will be acknowledged as the one true God and that all nations will come to worship Him. God's wisdom will judge all the disputes and disagreements between them equitably. War will be a thing of the past as God's wise and loving judgements will be accepted as the final word.

Romans 13: 11-14. Paul injects a tone of urgency and proclaims "You know what time it is". There are two types of time in the Bible. "Chronos" which is time passing – tick, tock – and "Kairos" or God's time, moment, or season. Recognising God's time and what an appropriate response might be to God's actions is the duty of the believer

Matthew 24: 36-44. Matthew speaks of a similar sense of urgency. The Parousia (presence of Christ) will happen suddenly without warning so the best plan is to be in a continual state of readiness to present yourself at whatever hour Christ comes for you. Alongside any general cosmic happening, this stands as a metaphor for our own personal deaths also.

Christmas Services across the RMC.

Family Carol Services at:

St Peter's Church Budleigh Salterton on 18th December at 18.00
St Michael's Otterton on 18th December at 16.00
All Saints' East Budleigh on 24th December at 18.00

Christingle Services at:

All Saints' East Budleigh on 18th December at 15.00
St Michael's Otterton on 24th December at 15.00
St Peter's Budleigh Salterton on 24th December at 17.00

Christmas Day Holy Communion Services:

Midnight Mass commencing 23.00 on 24th December at St Peter's Budleigh Salterton

St Peter's Budleigh Salterton at 8.00 & 10.00

All Saints' East Budleigh at 9.30

St Michael's Otterton at 11.00

Thought for the day.

Christmas has as far as I can discern it, has always been a time of excess. Conspicuous consumption, lots of presents, alcohol, food and entertainment. It is just those aspects that has meant that Christmas is big news across the world even in non-Christian cultures, where a Christ-less Christmas would be seen as entirely normal. As Christians we can lament the fact that the connection between the festival and Christianity is becoming quite tenuous (Religious Christmas cards are much harder to locate that Robins, stars, Santas, elves, and stockings) but what we need to do is not jettison the fun, frolics, TV specials, and presents in favour of an austere spiritual Christmas but let the two things run alongside each other but not letting one eclipse the other.

Christians invented the Holiday (Holy Day) and we designated certain days as joyful feast days to celebrate religious themes. Christmas is one such feast day where we are encouraged to let our hair down and celebrate. The difference perhaps between ourselves and our non-believing neighbours is that we actually know the reason we are celebrating. Christmas is not a party simply for the sake of having a party, we are celebrating the incarnation of God on earth in the humble and mortal human frame that was Jesus to connect with us and to reveal to us that God is intimately involved with the world, cares about us and wills our salvation. And if that isn't worth pushing the boat out and celebrating, I don't know what is!

The Prayer for Today is an Advent prayer from the church of South India.

**Almighty God, who in many and various ways
Speak to thy chosen people by the prophets,
And has given us, in thy Son our saviour Jesus Christ,
The fulfilment of the hope of Israel.
Hasten, we beseech thee the coming of the day**

**When all things shall be subject to him,
who lives and reigns with thee and the Holy Spirit,
ever one God world without end.
Amen.**

Love and peace,
Martin